



# *Town of Natick*

## **Spring 2015 Newsletter**

*Issued by Martha L. White,  
Town Administrator*

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### **Spring, Finally!**

Well the calendar says spring is finally here, but as I write this the temperatures and snow remnants cast doubt. This record breaking winter was difficult on everyone. Our area received over 8.5 feet of snow, most of that in a 5 week period. The average daily temperature in February was 18 degrees! Our DPW workforce was really put to the test this winter, and responded with their usual competence and commitment to service. During some of the major storm events, shifts of 30 hours or more were the norm and, all told, the workforce put in over 10,000 hours of overtime. Believe me, these guys wanted the snow to stop as much as the rest of us!

We thank our residents for their patience over this difficult winter – and this spring as we repair countless potholes – and I know you join me in thanking the dedicated and hard working DPW employees!

### **2015 Spring Annual Town Meeting**

The 2015 Spring Annual Town Meeting will commence on April 14 at 7:30 p.m. at the Natick High School. The Town Meeting Warrant includes numerous annually-recurring Articles such as re-authorization of revolving funds, increasing personal property exemptions, and capital equipment and improvement requests. Citizen petitions will be also be debated by Town Meeting, including proposals for moratoriums on the development of multi-family dwellings and on changes to use districts and regulations, as well as a proposal to restrict single-use plastic bags. The Electronic Voting Study Committee, authorized at the 2014 Fall Annual Town Meeting, will provide a report on its findings and recommendations as to the purchase and use of this technology for Town Meeting. Several articles regarding the property at 22 Pleasant Street will be discussed, including a report from the 22 Pleasant Street Rezoning Classification Study Committee (which was also formed at the 2014 Fall Annual Town Meeting), a proposal to acquire an easement over the property and a citizen petition proposing that the Town acquire the property.

These and other proposals are sure to generate interest among Town Meeting members and their constituents.

### **Fiscal Year 2016 Operating Budget**

The 2015 Spring Annual Town Meeting will also vote on the FY 2016 Operating Budget for all general government and school department operations and expenses. This year's budget was particularly difficult to bring into balance, in large part due to the school department's need to address rising student enrollment (over 400 students in the last 3 years), an approximately 14% increase in health care costs (nearly \$2 million increase), and rising pension costs (an increase of over \$560,000). As of this writing, through the hard work and cooperation of general government and school department administrations and elected boards, a balanced budget has been achieved. This budget will be presented to the Finance Committee on March 26; they will review the budget and formulate a recommendation to Town Meeting.

I am very grateful to Jeff Towne, Deputy Town Administrator/Finance Director, for his work on the budget. In Jeff's relatively short (15-month) tenure in Natick, his talents, capabilities and good judgment have been amply evident. Jeff has earned the trust, admiration and appreciation of myself and others involved in the budgeting process. Thank you Jeff!

### **Town Website**

Many of you have probably noticed the complete re-design and new features on the Town's website. Our goal is to improve the information on the site, as well as the ease of navigation throughout the site. The website offers two new features we think will be particularly helpful to residents. The *Community Calendar*, available from the home page, lists all Town activities in one place. Previously, to learn about programs offered by the Recreation and Parks Department, Morse Institute and Bacon Free Libraries, Council on Aging and other departments, you would have to visit each of these web

pages individually. Now all programs can be accessed through the Community Calendar.

We've also added a *Rent-A-Facility* feature, allowing committees and residents to view the availability of town facilities for meetings and other purposes, including rooms in the Town Hall, Morse Institute, Community-Senior Center and Police Station. The feature allows you to select the size of room you need, specify required room features (i.e. sound system, podium, etc.), and view availability by date. While the feature does not allow you to book the room, contact information is provided. Eventually we will be adding recreational facilities to this feature. Rent-A-Facility can be accessed from the home page by clicking on 'Residents', then on 'Rent A Facility' or via <http://natickma.gov/facilities>

We will be continuously improving, enhancing and updating the website and hope you will check back often to keep up to date with Town activities.

### **SeeClickFix Mobile App**

We will soon be introducing SeeClickFix mobile app, allowing users to report and track non-emergency issues such as potholes, streetlight outages and more. We hope that residents who take the time to report these issues and track our response will feel more engaged with the community. We expect to launch this program in May. Check the website or local media for more information.

### **Citizen Leadership Academy**

Another initiative to encourage citizen engagement is the Citizen Leadership Academy. This 10-week program will familiarize citizen participants with the roles, inter-relationships, missions, regulatory mandates and restrictions, accomplishments and much more regarding Town operations. The program is designed and organized by Jemma Lambert, Community Services Director.

Citizen Leadership Academy will be repeated twice per year with the inaugural class beginning on April 8. While these initial participants have been selected we encourage interested residents to sign up for future sessions by contacting Jemma at [jlambert@natickma.org](mailto:jlambert@natickma.org). Information about the Academy, including application materials, can be found on the Community Services webpage.

### **John J. Lane Park**

We welcome the community to join us at the Grand Opening of the John J. Lane Park, scheduled for Sunday April 26 at 3:00 p.m.

As has been previously reported, J.J. Lane Park is a newly renovated 7.25 acre park located on Speen Street. Of the total area, the Town owns 3.25 acres and 4 acres are leased from the State. With the additional leased area, the Town was able to fulfill its vision for a largely undeveloped park to provide open space and recreational opportunities for the West Natick neighborhoods and entire community.

The Park's beautiful design has been recognized by Massachusetts Recreation and Park Association, which has selected John J. Lane Park as the winner of the 2015 Design of Facility Agency Award, a program established to recognize Recreation Departments that create and renovate facilities that greatly enhance their community.

### **New Transportation Services Coming to Natick**

The Community Services Department is pleased to announce that we will soon be providing enhanced transportation services in our community through a partnership with the Metrowest Regional Transit Authority.

A new 10 passenger van, funded by the MWRTA, will provide door-to-door, accessible transportation service in town and to nearby communities with initial focus on getting elders and disabled residents to critical appointments. Added transportation services will follow.

The Community Services Department is seeking to build a team of volunteer drivers for this program.

- No special license is required.
- All volunteers are covered under the Town of Natick's insurance policy.
- Volunteer drivers are asked to commit to at least one 4-hour shift per week.
- All drivers are required to complete required training. All trainings are free of charge.

Interested volunteers should contact Karen Edwards at [kedwards@natickma.org](mailto:kedwards@natickma.org) or 508-647-6540 x1905.

### **Earth Day**

On April 26 from 11:00 to 3:00 Natick will celebrate Earth Day with kids' activities, wildlife demonstrations, vendors, food and more, all on the Town Common. (Rain Date May 3). Come learn about the many sustainable programs and practices Natick has put into action! Thank you to the volunteers, led by Pat Conaway, who organized this fun and educational event.



*Happy Spring!*

